

the opportunity to serve, to protect for yourselves and for your loved ones and for your fellow Americans the precious things that make life worth living and freedom worth defending.

I know your families are very proud of you today. Now go, and make America proud.

Good luck, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:22 a.m. in the Navy/Marine Corps Memorial Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Charles Larson, USN,

Superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy; Adm. Jay L. Johnson, USN, Chief of Naval Operations; Gen. Charles C. Krulak, USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps; Vice Adm. John R. Ryan, USN, incoming Superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy; Beverly Byron, Chair, U.S. Naval Academy Board of Visitors; Gen Robert T. (Tom) Marsh, USAF, Chairman, President's Commission on Critical Infrastructure Protection; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks on Transportation Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters *May 22, 1998*

The President. Good afternoon. Today Congress will take an important step toward preserving and expanding our prosperity in the new century. I am pleased that Congress likely will answer my call to pass a historic bill to strengthen our transportation system and maintain our commitment to fiscal discipline and investing in our people. It is a bill that will help our communities to modernize and build the roads and bridges, the railways and buses that link people of our great and vast country together, that keep our economy strong and vibrant.

I have said I would strongly support legislation that meets my core principles: First, it must keep our budget balanced, must preserve the budget surplus until we have saved Social Security first; and then it must not undermine other national priorities, including education, health care, child care, and the environment.

The bill being considered by the Congress this afternoon meets those principles. The measure does spend more than we wanted, but I am pleased that we have persuaded Congress to cut \$17 billion of excess spending from this bill. Therefore, we have reached, what I consider to be, a principled compromise. At the same time, the bill fulfills the transportation priorities I set forth in my balanced budget. It strengthens our commitments to encouraging mass transit, to protecting the environment, to expanding opportunities to disadvantaged businesses, to moving more Americans from welfare to work with transportation assistance.

But I am deeply disappointed by one thing that is missing from the bill. Congress has re-

fused to lower the national drunk driving standard to .08 percent blood alcohol content. We must have zero tolerance for irresponsible and reckless acts that endanger our children and loved ones traveling on our roads. We must make .08 the law in every State, and I will continue to work until that happens.

Finally, let me say, this bill does show that fiscal responsibility and investing in our future go hand in hand toward preparing our people and our country for the next century. I want to thank Secretary Slater and Larry Stein, especially, and the members of my economic team for the hard work they did starting from a very difficult bargaining position to reduce the spending in this bill. If Congress does, in fact, pass the bill, as expected, I will be pleased to sign it into law.

Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia

Q. Mr. President, did the Pakistani Prime Minister give you any assurances that he will resist any nuclear test at this point, and did you offer him anything, including a request of Congress to release the F-16's?

The President. Well, as you know, I talked to him on Monday, and I told him I would call him back at the end of the week, and I did so. And we had a good, long conversation about where we go from here to deal with some of their security concerns and other concerns. I continued to urge him to refrain from testing, and I told him that I had done everything I could do to get other world leaders involved in both supporting him, if he would refrain from

testing, and encouraging the Indians not to further aggravate the situation with precipitous comments or action in Kashmir or elsewhere. And we talked about some other things, but until we have resolved our conversations, I don't think I should get into any more detail.

I am impressed with the depth of understanding that the Prime Minister showed and with his genuine concern that he both protect the security of his country and do nothing to upset the decades-long effort now the world has been making toward nonproliferation. And we'll keep working on it and hoping for a good result.

Q. Mr. President, do you feel more optimistic in this situation now? Is there any reason to believe that the Pakistanis will not test?

The President. I think that anything I say to characterize the Prime Minister's present position would only make it more difficult for him and for others. I think they're having an honest debate within their government. I believe they want to do the right thing by their people. But they want to do the right thing by this great issue that affects even more than India and Pakistan.

All I can tell you is I'm working hard on this. I have spent an enormous amount of time on it in the last several days and will continue to do so. And if there are definitive developments about—in this area, I will be happy to tell you. But today we had a very long conversation, and it was a good one, and I'll continue to work on it and expect to have more for you over the next few days.

School Shootings

Q. Mr. President, what will you do about these school shootings? Will you demand, perhaps, a Federal age limit? This child actually owned the rifle he used.

The President. Well, let me say I'm going to address that in my radio address tomorrow. And then, after that, I'll be available to answer more questions about it.

China's Satellite Launch Capability

Q. Mr. President, you've been criticized by Congress for giving the approval for a U.S. satellite to go up on a Chinese rocket. Documents released today, apparently by the Justice Department, indicate that you may have been told that giving that approval could harm a criminal investigation of Loral and Hughes Corporation. Given

that knowledge—is that correct, and given that knowledge, was that the right thing to do?

The President. Well, first of all, I think the decision was the correct one. And I am glad that the documents, which have been turned over to the committee and apparently some have been released—I hope that at the appropriate time everybody will have access to the decision document. Let me back up and say that that decision, like every decision I make, was made based on what I thought was in the national interest and supportive of our national security.

About 10 years ago, it became obvious that our country had an interest in developing a globally competitive commercial satellite system and that we had more satellites that needed to get up in space than we had launchers to provide. So we needed to supplant satellite launches in America with satellite launch capacity in other countries, that included China but also Russia and Europe.

President Reagan adopted a policy then. President Bush continued the policy, and I continued the policy. There were about nine satellites launched in the 4 years of the Bush administration. I believe there have been about 11 launched under my administration under this policy.

This particular launch, the one in question, had to be recommended by the State Department. Then, after the State Department recommended it, it was concurred in that decision by the Defense Department and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. The National Security Council here sought the views of the Justice Department because of the matter to which you alluded; they raised a question about it. The NSC evaluated their concerns along with the decision of the State Department that it ought to go forward with the concurrence of the Defense Department, which was fully aware of the matters, and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and concluded that, on balance, we should go forward.

I got a decisionmaking memo to that effect, and I approved it. It was handled in the routine course of business. I believe the facts will show that. There was absolutely nothing done to transfer any technology inappropriately to the Chinese as a result of this decision. I believe it was in the national interest, and I can assure you it was handled in the routine course of business, consistent with the 10-year-old policy.

Secret Service Testimony

Q. Mr. Clinton, there's been a decision made that the Secret Service will not be allowed to use privilege in the case of the grand jury. Do you feel that by allowing Secret Service agents to testify that it would, in fact, harm future Presidents?

The President. Well, that's the Secret Service position. And President Bush agreed with them.

Q. Do you agree with them?

The President. And I think there's a serious possibility that that could occur, probably in a different sort of context. At least it will have a chilling effect on—perhaps on the conversations Presidents have and the work that they do and the way they do it. But it is true that there is no legal—there's no statute there.

But all these investigations have been carried out over the last 25 years in a climate of intense pro-investigation, and yet I don't think anyone ever thought about it because no one ever thought that anyone would ever abuse the responsibility the Secret Service has to the President, to the President's family. So there are some things that you ought not to have to make a law about, and I think that's basically where

we are, that it never occurred to anybody that anyone would ever be so insensitive to the responsibilities of the Secret Service that this kind of legal question would arise.

What the law would be on appeal or whether the Secret Service will appeal, I don't know because I haven't been involved in it. I don't think it's appropriate for me to be involved in it. But I think—yes, I think it will raise some serious questions and present a whole new array of problems for managing the Presidency and for the Secret Service managing their responsibility. And because previous people have understood that and cared enough about it, I don't think that anybody has ever even considered doing this before. But we're living in a time which is without precedent, where actions are being taken without precedent, and we just have to live with consequences.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Stein, Assistant to the President and Director of Legislative Affairs; and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on Agricultural Research Legislation

May 22, 1998

I am deeply disappointed that today the House did not approve the conference report on the agricultural research bill. This carefully crafted legislation balances a broad range of agricultural and nutrition concerns including: crop insurance, agriculture research, rural development, and food stamps for legal immigrants in need. It provides critical funding to ensure the viability of the crop insurance program as the basis of the farm income safety net; to improve food safety and the competitiveness of our farmers through better research; to restore needed food stamps to children, the elderly, and disabled, and refugees among our legal immigrants; and to improve the quality of life in rural areas.

I am grateful that the House today overwhelmingly defeated a rule that would have stripped the food stamp immigrant provisions from the bill and destroyed the delicate com-

promise in the conference report. Support across the country for these programs and this bill is wide and deep. Today's vote in the House and the Senate's overwhelming vote of 92–8 in passing the conference report is a reflection of the strong backing by farm groups, universities, church organizations, and advocates for the poor.

The House leadership today let down farmers, let down consumers, and let down the children, elderly, and disabled who need the food assistance contained in this bill. I urge the House of Representatives to complete its work and move expeditiously to pass the conference report without change, upon return from the Memorial Day recess.